Melodious tribute to Chowdaiah

The vocalist charmed the audience with his classicism and methodology.

The Percussive Arts Centre celebrated its annual (13th) Taalavaadyotsava'94 along with the celebrations of the birth centenary of the seven stringed — violin wizard Mysore T. Chowdaiah at two venues for five days from May.27. The programmes on the first four days were held at the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavana and the valedictory cum presentation of K. Puttu Rao Memorial Palghat Mani Iyer award to the veteran mridanga-vidwan Dandamudi Rama Mohana Rao at Chowdaiah Memorial Hall on May 31.

The Taalavaadyotsava'94 began on May 27 with the presentation of Palani Subramanya Pillai award to veteran violinist Anur S. Ramakrishna. Prof. S. K. Ramachandra Rao conferred the title 'Laya Kala Nipuna' upon Anur S. Ramakrishna. Mr. V. R. Kulakarni, Director, Department of Kannada and Culture released a souvenir and an audio cassette comprising compositions by T. Chowdaiah.

Two recitals featuring compositions by Chowdaiah, two instrumental ensembles, honouring of the disciples of Chowdaiah, a symposium on 'The art and personality of Chowdaiah', illustrated talks on the evolution of violin(by Anur) and traditional percussion instruments of India (by Dr. H. K. Ranganath), a lec-dem by K. S. Kalidas on 'Palani's style of mridanga play' and a demonstration of contemporary sophisticated and intricate pallavis by Mysore Manjunath(vocal) were the added attractions of the festival.

A trained vocalist Usha Char demonstrated her talents and concert-skills in a praiseworthy manner while singing a couple of Chowdaiah-compositions. Her rendition of 'Seshachala vaasa' (Kedaragowla) and 'Kathyayani Kalyani'(Kalyani with alapana) at the outset set the mood of the rasikas for an enjoyable musical evening. In the fairly detailed rendition of Bilahari she stuck to the classical discipline and thus the Bhaashaanga raga glowed with musical qualities. The krithi 'Prasanna Parvathi' was emotionally sung. She sang kalpana swaras with a tidy rhythm. Usha Char did well in rendering her recital to the accompaniment of the popular percussive instrumental ensemble 'Laya Lahari.'

Anur Dattatreya Sharma (mridanga), V. Krishna(khanjari), T. Srinivas(tabla), B. R. Ravikumar (ghata), Bangalore K. Venkataram (gettu Vadya), Anur Ananthakrishna Sharma (sammela, congo and drums),B. Dhruvaraj (maddale), H. S. Sudheendra (pakhawaz), R. Sathya Kumar(dholak), A. V. Kashinath(tavil), B. Rajasekhar(morsing) and A. Somasekhar(konnokkol) were the brilliant members of the ensemble. Nalina Mohan on the violin was complementary. The laya vinyasa carried out by the ensemble had many delightful moments to cherish.

Vocalist H. S. Anasuya Kulakarni, one of the disciples of Chowdaiah has already paid her tribute to her guru by way of publishing some of the former's compositions in a book. This time she sang some of them in her recital accompanied usefully by Lalgudi Rajalakshmi (violin) N. Vasudev (mridanga) and C. P. Vyasavitthal (khanjari). It became evident that Chowdaiah was a successful composer too, when Anasuya sang his compositions in Charukeshi (Saketarama), Kuntalavarali (Sharavanabhava) and Begade. The structure of the krithis was well-knit. The textual part was also of great lyrical value. Anasuya sang them with right emphasis on these aspects.

Prof. V. Ramarathnam, another disciple of Chowdaiah took one to the old world of music. The aging vocalist had his own problems of voice and stamina, but nevertheless, he charmed the audience with his classicism and methodology. The vocal support extended by Sukanya Prabhakar not only provided the contrast but also all the ideas of Prof. Ramarathnam were materialised by her. The opening Shahana varna was lively. One was thrilled to hear from him a

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fine and potential raga Balahamsa. The selection of Mysore Sadashiva Rao's krithi "Ninnuvina gati naakevaru" was another prize-item of his recital. Crisply sung "Maryaada gaadayya" made way for a fine listening experience. Keeravani ('Kaligiynte') was essayed both by Ramarathnam and Sukanya. The former's singing had a couple of phrases which were aesthetically pleasing. Sukanya covered all the facets of the raga in her meldious delineation. Rendition of Abhogi and 'Marubari' and Kalyani for "Himadrisute" (with neraval and kalpanaswaras) brought out the scholarship of the singers. Kandadevi Alagiriswamy (violin) and M. S. Ramaiah (mridanga) were spirited in their supportive role.

Pallavi singing is part of manodharma sangeetha in Carnatic music. The main artiste will always be at an advantage, for, he would have done sufficient homework. But it is a challenging task for the accompanists, particularly for the violinists, to encounter it. Some chivalrous main artistes make it a point to hint their accompanists on the structure and plans of the proposed pallavi rendition in the concert. Most times it does not happen.

Young but seasoned violinist-brothers Mysore M. Nagaraj and Mysore M. Manjunath have had many such instances in their musical career. They thrilled the audience in the demonstration of contemporary sophisticated and intricate pallavis. Manjunath surprised the audience with his refined singing. Nagaraj created the same experience with his comprehensive introductions to the pallavis demonstrated. He also provided the violin accompaniment. To add pep to this programme was A. V. Anand on his mridanga. Though the entire programme was a brain-teaser, without doubt, it exposed the lovers of music to another important aspect of Carnatic-cutcheri-craft.

The pallavis presented were in khanda tripude (chaturashra nadai; Mohana raga), khanda triputa (chaturashra nadai, in ateeta edduppu; Brindavana Saranga), mishra triputa (trishra nadai, Shanmukhapriya), adi tala (trishra nadai, Athana), chaturashra roopaka (mishra nadai, Begade), nadai malike (comprising four nadais in laghu and chaturashra in druta, Madhyamavathi), adi (poorvardha in khanda and uttarardha in chaturashra nadais Todi), khanda triputa (trishra nadai, Anandabhairavi) and adi (chaturashra nadai, Kalyani). It was an enlightening programme.

Vadya Laya Vrinda of Bombay gave a delightful performance. Conducted by T. S. Nandakumar, Vanamala Dikshit led the show with her violin play. She sketched Simhendramadhyama (Ninne nammiti: mishra chapu), Bahudari and Kalyani (pallavi: khanda chapu). The ensemble comprising Vidya Balasubramanyam (konnakol), Vijay Natesan, Vivek Rajagopal and N. Chidambaram (all mridangas), Shankar Lakshman (tavil), S. Sriram (khanjari), K. Kumar and Vivek Shivaram (ghatas) and Pramod Nair (morsing) reached the high spot in the elaboration of mishra and khanda chapu talas. The young percussionists displayed their skills and dexterity in handling different percussion instruments.

Veteran mridangist Dandamudi Rama Rao was conferred the title "Mridanga Kala Shiromani" along with the "K. Puttu Rao memorial Palghat Mani Iyer Award" by Karnataka Minister Ms. Nagamma

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Keshavamurthy. This was followed by a sensitive and scholarly violin solo by M. S. Gopalakrishnan supported well by his daughter Narmada Gopalakrishnan (second violin), T. A. S. Mani and M. A. Krishnamurthy on mridanga and ghata respectively. MSG began with that beautiful varna in Kalyani raga (Vanajakshi). Instrumental and aesthetic virtuosity which were the mainstay of his recital made Malahari (a Muthaiah bhagavatar's krithi), Umabharana, Hamsanandi, Begade (Nadopasana) and Sindhubhairavi ragas memorable ones. MSG's ingenuity shone in each of his sangathees. The tani avartana by the percussionists (Mani and Krishnamurthy) was short and succinct.

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